PATENT ABSTRACTS OF JAPAN

(11)Publication number:

11-288732

(43)Date of publication of application: 19.10.1999

(51)Int.Cl.

H01M 8/04 B01J 38/00 B29B 17/02 H01M 8/10 // B29K105:26

(21)Application number: 10-090048

(71)Applicant: ASAHI CHEM IND CO LTD

(22)Date of filing:

02.04.1998

(72)Inventor: HOSHI NOBUHITO

IKEDA MASANORI

(54) METHOD FOR RECOVERING AND REUSING MATERIAL FOR SOLID HIGH POLYMER FUEL CELL

(57)Abstract:

PROBLEM TO BE SOLVED: To provide a method for easily recovering catalyst metal from a used out solid high polymer fuel cell, also recovering fluoropolymers containing sulfonic acid, thus efficiently recyclably using the main materials of the solid high polymer fuel cell.

SOLUTION: This fuel cell material recovering method includes a process dissolving a fuel cell ion-exchange membrane/electrode junction body in a solvent where fuluoropolymers are dissolved, and separating insoluble materials including catalyst material from the fluoropolymer solution. The recovered fluoropolymers are reused as the ion-exchange membrane and/or an electrode catalyst coating flux.

LEGAL STATUS

[Date of request for examination]

01.04.2005

[Date of sending the examiner's decision of rejection]

[Kind of final disposal of application other than the examiner's decision of rejection or application converted registration]

[Date of final disposal for application]

[Patent number]

[Date of registration]

[Number of appeal against examiner's decision of rejection]

[Date of requesting appeal against examiner's decision of rejection]

[Date of extinction of right]

* NOTICES *

JPO and NCIPI are not responsible for any damages caused by the use of this translation.

- 1. This document has been translated by computer. So the translation may not reflect the original precisely.
- 2.**** shows the word which can not be translated.
- 3.In the drawings, any words are not translated.

CLAIMS

[Claim(s)]

[Claim 1] The ion exchange membrane which consists of a fluorine-containing polymer which has a sulfonic group (a), From the polymer electrolyte fuel cell which has the film / electrode zygote which is joined to this ion exchange membrane, and which consists of gas diffusion electrodes (b) which make main components electrode catalyst coating which consists of conductive support which supported the catalyst metal, and a proton conductivity polymer By performing dissolution processing of the above-mentioned film / electrode zygote in the approach of collecting a catalyst metal and fluorine-containing polymers, in the solvent which dissolves this fluorine-containing polymer, the solution of this fluorine-containing polymer, The recovery approach of the charge of polymer electrolyte fuel cell material characterized by including the process divided into a part for nsoluble Monobe containing the conductive support which supported the catalyst metal.

Claim 2] The recovery approach of the charge of polymer electrolyte fuel cell material according to claim 1 characterized by a catalyst metal coming to contain noble metals.

Claim 3] The recovery approach of the charge of polymer electrolyte fuel cell material according to claim 1 or 2 that the conductive support which supported the catalyst metal is a carbon material.

Claim 4] The recovery approach of the charge of polymer electrolyte fuel cell material according to claim 1, 2, or 3 characterized by electrode catalyst coating which consists of a proton conductivity polymer consisting of a luorine-containing polymer which has a sulfonic group.

Claim 5] The recovery approach of the charge of polymer electrolyte fuel cell material according to claim 1, 2, 3, or 4 characterized by collecting catalyst metals by performing combustion or aqua-regia processing to a part for nsoluble Monobe containing the conductive support which supported the catalyst metal.

Claim 6] The reuse approach of the charge of polymer electrolyte fuel cell material characterized by reusing the luorine-containing polymer which has the sulfonic group obtained by the recovery approach of the charge of polymer electrolyte fuel cell material according to claim 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 as electrode catalyst coating which constitutes a gas diffusion electrode.

[Claim 7] The reuse approach of the charge of polymer electrolyte fuel cell material characterized by reusing the luorine-containing polymer which has the sulfonic group collected by the recovery approach of the charge of polymer electrolyte fuel cell material according to claim 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 to manufacture of the ion exchange membrane for polymer electrolyte fuel cells.

Claim 8] The reuse approach of the charge of polymer electrolyte fuel cell material characterized by nanufacturing the film by the cast method from the fluorine-containing polymer solution which has the sulfonic group collected by the recovery approach of the charge of polymer electrolyte fuel cell material according to plaim 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5, heat-treating this film at 50-200 degrees C after that, and reusing as ion exchange nembrane for polymer electrolyte fuel cells.

Translation done.]

* NOTICES *

JPO and NCIPI are not responsible for any damages caused by the use of this translation.

- 1. This document has been translated by computer. So the translation may not reflect the original precisely.
- 2.**** shows the word which can not be translated.
- 3.In the drawings, any words are not translated.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[Detailed Description of the Invention]

[0001]

[0002]

[Field of the Invention] This invention relates to recovery and the reuse approach of a fluorine-containing polymer and a catalyst of having the sulfonic group used for this polymer electrolyte fuel cell as ion exchange membrane and electrode catalyst coating in more detail, about the recovery of an ingredient and the reuse approach which are used for polymer electrolyte fuel cells.

[Description of the Prior Art] By oxidizing fuels, such as hydrogen and a methanol, electrochemically within a cell, the chemical energy of a fuel is transformed into direct electrical energy, and a fuel cell takes it out, and attracts attention as a clean electrical energy source of supply in recent years. High power density is obtained, and since low-temperature actuation is possible, the polymer electrolyte fuel cell using especially the proton exchange film as an electrolyte is expected as a power source for electric vehicles.

[0003] Such basic structure of a polymer electrolyte fuel cell consists of ion exchange membrane and a gas diffusion electrode which has the catalyst bed of the pair joined by the both sides, and consists of structure of arranging a charge collector on the both sides further. And it operates as a fuel cell by supplying oxygen and air which are an oxidizer about the hydrogen which is a fuel, or a methanol at another gas diffusion electrode (cathode) to one gas diffusion electrode (anode), respectively, and connecting an external load circuit to it among both gas diffusion electrodes. At this time, the proton generated with the anode moves to a cathode side through ion exchange membrane, reacts with oxygen with a cathode, and generates water. Ion exchange membrane is functioning as the migration medium of a proton, and a diaphragm of hydrogen gas or oxygen gas here. Therefore, proton conductivity high as this ion exchange membrane, reinforcement, and chemical stability are required, and the fluorine-containing polymer which has sulfonic groups, such as a perfluoro sulfonic-acid polymer represented by "Nafion (trademark)" by U.S. Du Pont and "ASHIPU REXX-S (trademark)" by Asahi Chemical Industry Co., Ltd., is used as a film ingredient which now has such a function.

[0004] What generally supported noble metals, such as platinum, as a catalyst of a gas diffusion electrode on the other hand to the support which has electronic conduction nature, such as carbon, is used. The proton shift to the catalyst top currently supported by this gas diffusion electrode is carried, and although the proton conductivity polyelectrolyte is too used as electrode catalyst coating in order to raise the use effectiveness of this catalyst, the fluorine-containing polymer which has sulfonic groups, such as the perfluoro sulfonic-acid polymer same also as this ingredient as ion exchange membrane, can be used. The fluorine-containing polymer which has the sulfonic group which is electrode catalyst coating can also make a role of the binder of the catalyst of a gas diffusion electrode, or cement for raising the adhesion of ion exchange membrane and a gas diffusion electrode bear here.

[0005] Thus, the fluorine-containing polymer which has sulfonic groups, such as a perfluoro sulfonic-acid polymer which expensive noble metals, such as platinum, are generally used for the fuel cell upwards as a catalyst of a gas diffusion electrode, and is used as electrode catalyst coating as ion exchange membrane, is also an again very expensive ingredient. Among these, although recycle use is assumed as a premise of fuel cell utilization about catalyst metals, such as noble metals, in order to actually perform recovery processing, it is necessary to remove completely the fluorine-containing polymer as electrode catalyst coating which has covered the catalyst front face. Moreover, most zygotes of an ion exchange membrane and a gas diffusion electrode are occupied with a fluorine-containing polymer, carbon, etc. If combustion tends to remove this, since the corrosive fluoric acid generated from a fluorine-containing polymer is contained so much in waste gas even when a fluorine-containing polymer cannot burn upwards very easily and it burns, the special waste gas processing facility for fluoric acid removal is needed.

[0006] Moreover, when it began to melt a catalyst metal to an aqua regia etc. and was going to collect them from the film / electrode zygote to it directly, for example, the fluorine-containing polymer which has covered the catalyst became a failure, and perfect elution became difficult. Moreover, even if it is able to be eluted, a lot of aqua regias will be needed for the fluorine-containing polymer contained in large quantities as compared with a

catalyst metal. Thus, recovery of catalyst metals, such as platinum, was by no means easy.

[0007] Although the approach of on the other hand collecting and reusing to JP,8-171922,A with the film about the fluorine-containing polymer which is used as ion exchange membrane of a polymer electrolyte fuel cell and which has a sulfonic group is indicated, if washing and desiccation are repeated, in order that a wrinkling may come together or deform this ion exchange membrane for its swelling and contraction, it is very difficult to include in the same cel again. Therefore, the practical approach of collecting these fluorine-containing polymers and reusing was not examined until now, but it could not but perform disposal by reclamation, without the facility equipped with the waste gas treatment equipment special as mentioned above having performed incineration processing, or collecting catalyst metals. Such an approach pulls up abandonment processing cost, or increases the load to an environment.

[8000]

[Problem(s) to be Solved by the Invention] This invention collects the fluorine-containing polymers which have the sulfonic group which is an ingredient it is the same and expensive and useful, and offers the approach of enabling efficient reuse of the main ingredients of a polymer electrolyte fuel cell at the same time it offers the approach of making easy recovery of the catalyst metal from the conventionally difficult used polymer electrolyte fuel cell.

[0009]

[The means for solving invention] That is, this invention is as follows.

- 1. Ion Exchange Membrane Which Consists of Fluorine-containing Polymer Which Has Sulfonic Group (a), From the polymer electrolyte fuel cell which has the film / electrode zygote which is joined to this ion exchange membrane, and which consists of gas diffusion electrodes (b) which make main components electrode catalyst coating which consists of conductive support which supported the catalyst metal, and a proton conductivity polymer By performing dissolution processing of the above-mentioned film / electrode zygote in the approach of collecting a catalyst metal and fluorine-containing polymers, in the solvent which dissolves this fluorine-containing polymer, the solution of this fluorine-containing polymer, The recovery approach of the charge of polymer electrolyte fuel cell material characterized by including the process divided into a part for insoluble Monobe containing the conductive support which supported the catalyst metal.
- 2. Recovery approach of charge of polymer electrolyte fuel cell material given in one characterized by catalyst metal coming to contain noble metals.
- 3. Recovery approach of charge of polymer electrolyte fuel cell material of 1 or 2 publications whose conductive support which supported catalyst metal is carbon materials.
- 4. Recovery approach of charge of polymer electrolyte fuel cell material of 1, 2, or 3 publications which are characterized by electrode catalyst coating which consists of proton conductivity polymer consisting of fluorine-containing polymer which has sulfonic group.
- 5. Recovery approach of charge of polymer electrolyte fuel cell material of 1, 2, 3, or 4 publications which are characterized by collecting catalyst metals by performing combustion or aqua-regia processing to part for insoluble Monobe containing conductive support which supported catalyst metal.
- 6. Reuse approach of charge of polymer electrolyte fuel cell material characterized by reusing fluorine-containing polymer which has sulfonic group obtained by recovery approach of charge of polymer electrolyte fuel cell material 1, 2, 3, 4, or given in five as electrode catalyst coating which constitutes gas diffusion electrode.
- 7. Reuse approach of charge of polymer electrolyte fuel cell material characterized by reusing fluorine-containing polymer which has sulfonic group collected by recovery approach of charge of polymer electrolyte fuel cell material 1, 2, 3, 4, or given in five to manufacture of ion exchange membrane for polymer electrolyte fuel cells.
- 8. Reuse approach of charge of polymer electrolyte fuel cell material characterized by manufacturing film by cast method from fluorine-containing polymer solution which has sulfonic group collected by recovery approach of charge of polymer electrolyte fuel cell material 1, 2, 3, 4, or given in five, heat-treating this film at 50-200 degrees C after that, and reusing as ion exchange membrane for polymer electrolyte fuel cells.
- [0010] This invention offers the approach of collecting expensive useful ingredients from the zygote (the film / electrode zygote being call hereafter .) of the ion exchange membrane and the gas diffusion electrode which constitute a polymer electrolyte fuel cell effectively , the description dissolves with a solvent the fluorine—containing polymer which has a sulfonic group from this film / electrode zygote , and it is in including the process divide into a part for the solution of this fluorine—containing polymer , and insoluble Monobe containing a catalyst metal . That is, since the fluorine—containing polymer which is the principal component of (1) film / electrode zygote by dissolving ion exchange membrane and the fluorine—containing polymer which has covered the catalyst, and dissociating is removed, the content of a catalyst metal increases by leaps and bounds, and recovery actuation of this metal becomes easy.
- (2) Since there is no component which has already covered the catalyst metal, it can also be begun with a direct aqua regia etc. to melt a metal component.
- [0011] Moreover, the application as a solution can be presented with the fluorine-containing polymer solution which has one sulfonic group by performing suitable purification. That is, if the concentration of a solution and a

solvent presentation are readjusted, it will just be the solution of electrode catalyst coating, cement, and/or an electrode catalyst binder (electrode catalyst coating etc. is called hereafter.) itself, and if a film is produced by the cast method, reusing as ion exchange membrane is also possible.

[0012] That is, in this invention, the approach of carrying out recycle use of a catalyst metal, ion exchange membrane, electrode catalyst coating which are a useful ingredient is attained to coincidence by including the process in which a fluorine-containing polymer is dissolved in the above-mentioned recovery actuation. Hereafter, sequential explanation is given about the requirements for a configuration of this invention. The fluorine-containing polymer which has a sulfonic group as used in the field of this invention is a polymer which has a sulfonic group as a substituent in a fluorocarbon frame or a hydronalium fluorocarbon frame, and you may have a ether group, chlorine, the carboxylic-acid radical, the phosphoric-acid radical, and the ring in intramolecular. Generally perfluorocarbon is made into a principal chain frame, and the polymer which has a sulfonic group through spacers, such as the perfluoro ether and a ring, is used. The polymer of the structure expressed with following the (1) type or (2) types as an example can be illustrated.

[0013] [Formula 1] —(CF₂CF)_m——(CF₂CF₂)_n—

$$(OCF_2CF)_x - O - (CF_2)_y - SO_3H$$
 CF_3

[0014] (It is the integer of x=0-2, the integer of y=2-3, and n/m=1-10 among a formula.) [0015]

[0016] (It is n/m=0.1-2 among a formula.)

As a polymer of (1) type, Du Pont "Nafion (trademark)", "ASHIPU REXX-S (trademark) etc." by Asahi Chemical Industry Co., Ltd., etc. are known, and, as for the polymer of (2) types, the use as a fuel cell is actually indicated by the Patent Publication Heisei 8-No. 512358 official report. In these, since it is [that a perfluoro polymer like (1) type is excellent in the stability when using as a fuel cell, and] expensive, it is desirable as an ingredient of the object which applies the approach of this invention.

(2)

[0017] Moreover, the approach of dissolving such a fluorine-containing polymer and using as a solution is indicated by JP,48-13333,B, JP,5-223181,A, etc. These are the things aiming at covering of the catalyst for fuel cells etc., and indicate the approach of setting only 100% of pure polymer as the object of the dissolution. In the case of for the purpose of recovery / reuse, these conditions can be used as an object of dissolution processing of a composite material called a zygote with an electrode.

[0018] That is, as a solvent which dissolves a fluorine-containing polymer in this invention, in a polar high organic solvent or a polar fluorine-containing compound, it is independent or, generally the mixed solvent of an organic solvent, and a polar high water and a polar high fluorine-containing compound etc. is used. As a former polar high organic solvent, alcohols, amides, ketones, ether, nitryl compounds, and sulphur-containing compounds are used. As alcohols, specifically A methanol, ethanol, 1-propanol, 2-propanol, 1-butanol, 2-butanol, t-butyl alcohol, The various isomers of a pentanol, methyl cellosolve, ethylcellosolve, Propyl cellosolve etc. is mentioned. As amides Dimethylformamide, Dimethylacetamide, N-methyl pyrrolidone, etc. are mentioned. As ketones An acetone, 2butanone etc. is mentioned. As ether Ethyl ether, the propyl ether, Isopropyl ether, butyl ether, dimethoxyethane, diethylene-glycol wood ether, A tetrahydrofuran, dioxane, etc. are mentioned, an acetonitrile, propionitrile, valeronitrile, MARONO nitril, an adiponitrile, etc. are mentioned as nitryl compounds, and dimethyl sulfoxide, a sulfolane, etc. are mentioned as sulphur-containing compounds. These can also be used as mixture. As a fluorine-containing compound, specifically Moreover, CFCs of CFC113 grade HCFC225ca, HCFC225cb, and HCFC(s) of HCFC123 grade HFC236ea, HFC338pcc, HFC43-10mee, HFC, such as HFC53-12myee, perfluoro butyl methyl ether, Hydronalium fluoro ether, such as perfluoro butyl ethyl UTERU, 1, 1, 1, 3, 3, and 3hexafluoro-2-propanol, 2, 2, 3 and 3, 3-pentafluoro propanol, 2, 2, and 2-trifluoro ethanol, 2, 2 and 3, 3tetrafluoro propanol, Fluoro alcohols, such as 2, 2, 3, 3, 4, 4, 5, and 5-octafluoro pentanol, 2-(perfluoro butyl) ethanol, 2-(perfluoro hexyl) ethanol, and 3-(perfluoro hexyl) propanol, etc. are mentioned. These can also be used as mixture.

[0019] When mixing with water and using the above-mentioned polar high organic solvent, it is used as independent or the mixed solvent which serves as 20 - 100 % of the weight of two or more sorts of mixture from

0 – 80 % of the weight of water of a polar high organic solvent. Moreover, when mixing and using a polar high organic solvent and a polar fluorine-containing compound, use at a rate of arbitration is possible. In these solvents, when the fluorine-containing polymer which has a sulfonic group is a polymer expressed with (1) type, long-chain fluoro alcohols, such as a mixed solvent of water, oxygenated compounds, such as a mixed solvent of alcohols and alcohols, and a fluorine-containing compound, a mixed solvent with nitryl compounds and a fluorinecontaining compound, and 2-(perfluoro hexyl) ethanol, have highly desirable especially solubility. [0020] The charge collector which the film / electrode zygote set as the object of dissolution processing in this invention serve as an ion exchange membrane from a gas diffusion electrode fundamentally, in addition consists of carbon paper etc. may be contained. As a general configuration of a polymer electrolyte fuel cell, ion exchange membrane consists of a fluorine-containing polymer which has the aforementioned sulfonic group, and an about 30-200-micrometer thing is usually used as the thickness. The core material which furthermore consists of textile fabrics, such as polytetrafluoroethylene, may be included. Furthermore, what doped the fluorinecontaining polymer which has a sulfonic group may be used for porous film, such as polytetrafluoroethylene. [0021] Moreover, the gas diffusion electrode used for a fuel cell makes main components electrode catalyst coating which serves as conductive support which supported the particle of a catalyst metal from a proton conductivity polymer, and water repellents, such as polytetrafluoroethylene, may be contained. As a catalyst metal, noble metals, such as platinum, gold, silver, palladium, iridium, a rhodium, and a ruthenium, or the alloy of *******, and the alloy containing them are usable, and when the catalyst metal contains noble metals, especially this invention is useful. In many cases, as a catalyst metal, platinum is actually used. Generally as conductive support, various carbon materials, such as carbon black, activated carbon, and a graphite, are used. In addition, water repellents, such as polytetrafluoroethylene, may be contained also in a charge collector. Although what is necessary is just the ingredient which has proton conductivity as electrode catalyst coating, since the stable ingredient is chemically desirable, the fluorine-containing polymer which has a film ingredient and a sulfonic acid of the same kind is used in many cases. The approach of this invention has high usefulness, especially when a fluorine-containing polymer is used also for electrode catalyst coating. [0022] Fluorine system ingredients, such as polytetrafluoroethylene as water repellent contained in a core material, an electrode, etc. in an ion exchange membrane in the ingredient which constitutes these film / electrode zygotes, can serve as the interfering substance in the recovery approach of this invention at insolubility, incombustibility, and the point that serves as a generation source of hydrogen fluoride gas at the time of combustion. However, though the core material could make after the dissolution of ion exchange membrane easy the ** exception and water repellent was used, since the amount is a minute amount very much, it does not affect the approach of this invention. يا 0023] Next, the recovery approach of the charge of polymer electrolyte fuel cell material in this invention is explained concretely. The fuel cell with which recycle is presented by the reasons of used or a defect removes nousing and a pipe fitting first, removes a gasket, and takes out the film / electrode zygote. In this case, after removing a charge collector, it is desirable to perform dissolution processing, but when having stuck firmly with on exchange membrane, it is not necessary to necessarily remove. However, since the metal ion may be accumulated in used film / electrode zygote, it is desirable to perform acid cleaning before dissolution processing n that case, and to remove this metal ion. _0024] This film / electrode zygote are crushed as occasion demands, adds a predetermined solvent, and performs the following dissolution actuation. Although the amount of the solvent to be used should have only the amount which melts this fluorine-containing polymer completely at this time, generally an excessive amount is used and an about 10 to 1000-time amount is preferably used five to 10000 times to the weight of the film / electrode zygote which performs dissolution processing. Moreover, although a melting temperature should just be temperature into which this fluorine-containing polymer melts, as long as the temperature is over the boiling point in the ordinary pressure of a solvent, it may perform dissolution processing under pressurization. Generally dissolution processing is performed in room temperature -270 degree C. The time amount which performs dissolution processing is usually about 1 minute -1 day that what is necessary is just time amount required for the perfect dissolution. In order to speed up the dissolution, stirring and ultrasonic irradiation may be performed. [0025] Although after dissolution processing will be divided into a part for a fluorine-containing polymer solution and insoluble Monobe containing a catalyst metal, since the catalyst which supported the catalyst metal is a particle, big ingredients, such as a core material and carbon paper, are easily removable with a reticulated filter. Moreover, it is more desirable to remove, also in order to make next separation actuation easy. Although means, such as filtration, natural sedimentation, and centrifugal separation, separate insoluble matter, such as a catalyst, from the fluorine-containing polymer solution which distributes and contains a catalyst particle, since this

fluorine-containing polymer solution is viscosity in high concentration, it is desirable to prepare concentration by approaches, such as dilution, so that it may become moderate viscosity. When diluting, the solvent may differ from the solvent at the time of the dissolution. Filtration is 2-10kg/cm2. The pressure filtration of extent is desirable, and in order to lower viscosity, it is desirable to heat a solution at about 50-200 degrees C. Although the thing of a class extensive as a filtering medium can be used, when adopting the approach of carrying out

combustion processing with support carbon later, the filter which consists of a filter paper or an inflammable polymer ingredient is desirable. In order to make a catalyst particle easy to hold, filter aids, such as filter paper powder and diatomaceous earth, may be used. After filtration washes a filtering medium with a suitable solvent. [0026] In natural sedimentation, the concentration which to dilute further is more desirable and is about 0.01 – 1 % of the weight is more desirable than the case of filtration. For example, if the depth is about 1m, a management will be separated for at least 1 hour or more, after putting the 1st day or more preferably. The lower layer section is diluted further and repeats the same actuation. 90% or more, after [the polymer which was dissolving] dissociating 99% or more of preferably, a part for insoluble Monobe which mainly consists of a catalyst particle except for the solvent of the lower layer section by filtration or distillation is obtained.

[0027] Moreover, in order to make a catalyst particle sediment efficiently for a short time, as for a centrifugal force, more than 1000G is desirable, more than 2000G is still more desirable, and more than 5000G is still more desirable [in the case of centrifugal separation since the specific gravity of a catalyst particle depends on the metaled amount of support conditions do not generally have **********, but]. thus, as an approach of collecting useful metals, such as noble metals, from a part for insoluble Monobe containing the separated catalyst metal Although how to melt the approach of beginning to melt noble—metals components, such as platinum, with a direct aqua regia or the ash content which destroyed by fire and remained except for the carbon component, the filtering medium, etc. to an aqua regia, and to collect noble metals as a solution can be considered since the fluorine—containing polymer of the catalyst metal circumference which blocks elution does not exist any longer Since insoluble matter components other than catalyst metals, such as platinum, mainly consist of an ingredient of a carbon system in the case of the latter, a carbon ingredient is effectively removable by performing incineration processing for this. The ash content which remained is efficiently recoverable including a metal component to high concentration more. Moreover, in incineration processing, since the main fluorine—containing polymer is already removed, in waste gas, corrosive fluoric acid is hardly contained and the special waste gas processing facility for fluoric acid removal is not needed.

[0028] On the other hand, the direction of a fluorine-containing polymer solution is reusable as ion exchange membrane, electrode catalyst coating, etc. In reusing, the solid impurity is already removed, but when the impurity which is dissolving is included, a process which removes the impurity concerned may be required. For example, purification by reprecipitation may be performed depending on the class of polymer, it is the solvent which is not mixed with these fluorine-containing polymer solutions, such as a hydrocarbon, and extract removal of the oily impurity can also be carried out. Moreover, a rough polymer can be swollen and washed and a suitable swelling solvent can also refine it. Moreover, it can process with hydrogen peroxide solution or an oxidizer like pzone, and oxidative degradation removal of the impurity component can also be carried out.

[0029] To reuse this fluorine-containing polymer solution as electrode catalyst coating etc., since these solutions are collected in the condition of having diluted considerably as shown previously, it is necessary to condense to suitable concentration. Usually, 3 % of the weight – 20% of the weight of a thing is used. Moreover, it permutes and is used for the mixed solvent of lower alcohol, such as the solvent generally used as a solution of a fluorine-containing polymer as occasion demands, i.e., a methanol, ethanol, 1-propanol, 2-propanol, and a putanol, or these and water etc.

[0030] On the other hand, after changing into a suitable functional group the wet film production and the end group which are immersed in the coagulation bath of film production by the cast method after performing concentration and a solvent permutation as occasion demands, and a poor solvent in this fluorine-containing polymer solution, and produce a film, for example as an approach of regenerating this fluorine-containing polymer as ion exchange membrane, the approach of carrying out melting film production etc. is mentioned. When the film production and wet film production by the cast method are performed, heat-treatment can adjust membraneous ability, such as reinforcement. In this case, 50–200 degrees C is suitable for the temperature to heat-treat, and makes it preferably 100–200 degrees C still more preferably 80–200 degrees C. moreover — as the approach of carrying out melting film production — a sulfonic group — various kinds of approaches — an acid full ora — after changing into the id, the approach of producing a film etc. is mentioned.

[0031] In addition, the solution of a fluorine-containing polymer collected by the approach of this invention can also be diverted to other purposes as solutions membranous repair, for coatings, etc. While making easy recovery of the catalyst metal from the conventionally difficult spent fuel cell if the approach of this invention is followed as shown above, the fluorine-containing polymer which has the sulfonic group which is an ingredient it is the same and expensive and useful is recoverable to coincidence. Therefore, it also becomes possible to aim at reuse of this polymer, and since trash is sharply reducible, the load to an environment can be reduced. [0032]

Embodiment of the Invention] An example explains this invention to a detail further below. 0033

Example 1] <The film / electrode zygote (MEA) production> to 40% of the weight of platinum catalyst support carbon (product made from U.S. E-TEK) the solution (a trade name --) which dissolved the fluorine-containing polymer expressed with following the (1) type with an exchange capacity of 950g [/Eq] in the mixed solvent of

water-ethanol (volume ratio 1:1) by 5% of the weight of concentration ASHIPU REXX-SS950 and the Asahi Chemical Industry Co., Ltd. make were added so that the weight ratio of a platinum catalyst and a polymer might be set to 2:1, homogeneity was distributed, and the paste was prepared. After applying this paste on a Teflon sheet using the screen of 200 meshes so that it may be set to catalyst area 2cmx2cm, it dries and fixes at 100 degrees C among an atmospheric-air ambient atmosphere, and it is amount of platinum support 0.25 mg/cm2. The catalyst sheet was obtained.

[0034] [Formula 3] —(CF_2CF_1)_m—(CF_2CF_2)_n— (OCF_2CF_1)_x— $O-(CF_2)$)_y— SO_3H CF_3

[0035] (It is the integer of x=0-2, the integer of y=2-3, and n/m=1-10 among a formula.)

The film (a trade name, ASHIPU REXX - S1004, Asahi Chemical Industry Co., Ltd. make) which consists the catalyst bed of the catalyst sheet of two sheets of 100 micrometers in the exchange capacity of 950g/Eq and thickness and a film surface product 3cmx3cm fluorine-containing polymer similarly expressed with (1) type facing each other and between them is inserted, and they are 150 degrees C and the pressure of 50kg/cm2. After carrying out a hotpress, the double-sided Teflon sheet was removed and the film / electrode zygote (MEA) was produced.

The five above-mentioned film / electrode zygotes after the evaluation trial as a <separation and recovery> cell (9.2g) were cut out to below 1cm angle extent, 500ml of mixed solvents of water-ethanol (volume ratio 1:1) was added to this, it stirred at 230 degrees C among the autoclave for 20 hours, and dissolution processing was performed. The black slurry was obtained after the dissolution. It diluted with 1 morel. ethanol after cooling to the room temperature, pressure filtration (filter paper: the Toyo Roshi make, No.4A, filter aid:Toyo Roshi make, filter paper powder C) was carried out at 60 degrees C, and the catalyst on a filter paper was washed by 500ml ethanol. The pressure filtration (filter paper: the Toyo Roshi make, No.4A, filter aid:cerite) of the filtrate was again carried out at 60 degrees C, and when washed by 500 moreml ethanol, the almost colorless polymer solution (filtrate) was obtained.

[0036] In order to investigate extent of separation of platinum and a polymer, when the solid-state 19 F-NMR spectrum of the filter aid part of the 1st filtration [2nd] was measured first, the absorption originating in a polymer was not detected. Next, elution of the platinum is carried out with an aqua regia from the filter paper and filter aid of the 1st filtration [2nd]. The place which investigated the amount of platinum by ICP on the other hand about the solution which dissolved in the 1ml aqua regia, respectively after carrying out evaporation to dryness of the 50ml from filtrate, On the filter paper and the filter paper (the 1st time) (the 2nd time), with filtrate, it is 99.9% or more, 0.1% or less, and 0%, respectively, and, as for phase contrast of distribution of platinum, it turned out that it dissociates nearly completely [a fluorine—containing polymer and platinum]. Also excluding a part for a fluorine, since most was the filter paper and carbon which can burn easily, platinum pecame possible [collecting by high concentration as ash content] at the component containing especially platinum.

After condensing the filtrate containing a <membranous playback> penetrant remover to about 300ml first, it develops to a stainless steel bat, and it carried out the flow of the dry air, and carried out the air dried. Having dissolved the obtained polymer in 100ml n-propanol, and having developed the part on the petri dish, and it naving been air-dry in ordinary temperature, and heating at 150 more degrees C for 2 hours, the vacuum drying was carried out and the cast film (55 micrometers of thickness) of light brown was created. When the tensile strength of this film was measured, it was equivalent to 206kg/cm2 (53% of ductility) of the new film at 200kg/cm2 (48% of ductility). Further, the obtained film was processed in ebullition distilled water in 3% hydrogen peroxide solution of ebullition for 1 hour, processed it in ebullition distilled water in 2N sulfuric acid of ebullition for 1 hour for 1 hour for 1 hour, respectively, carried out the vacuum drying to the last at 110 degrees C for 16 nours, and MEA production was presented with it.

[0037] When MEA was produced like [film / playback] the case of the new film and the output characteristics as a cell were evaluated, the difference with the new film was not accepted in an initial property and continuous running of 300 hours.

[0038]

Example 2] Like the example 1, five the film / electrode zygotes after an evaluation trial (9.2g) were cut out to below 1cm angle extent, 500ml of mixed solvents of water-ethanol (volume ratio 1:1) was added to this, it stirred at 230 degrees C among the autoclave for 20 hours, and dissolution processing was performed. The obtained slurry was diluted with 1.5 morel, ethanol after cooling to the room temperature, and it put for five days at the room temperature. About 90 percent of supernatants were collected, the remainder was diluted with ethanol about 5 times, and it put at the room temperature again for 24 hours. About 90 percent of supernatants were

collected similarly, and the actuation which dilutes and puts the remainder was repeated twice [further]. [0039] When the component including precipitate was dried, platinum was dissolved with the 50ml aqua regia and the amount of platinum was calculated by ICP, it is 196 ppm and 98% of the amounts of theory calculated as amount of platinum support 0.25 mg/cm2 of a catalyst bed have been collected. Although the amount of platinum was calculated by ICP on the other hand about the solution which dissolved in the 1ml aqua regia after collecting supernatants (3500ml) and carrying out evaporation to dryness of the 50ml among those, it was below limit of detection. Besides it became clear, and it condensed like the example 1, liquid was air—dried, the vacuum drying was carried out to the last at 50 degrees C for 16 hours, and polymer 9.1g was collected (100% of recovery). The cast film (70 micrometers of thickness) was created from the solution which dissolved this polymer in 100ml n—propanol, and the obtained film was processed like the example 1 and it considered as the film for MEA production.

[0040] When MEA was produced like [film / playback] the example 1 and the output characteristics as a cell were evaluated, the difference with the new film was not accepted in an initial property and continuous running of 300 hours.

[0041]

[Example 3] One the film / electrode zygote after the same evaluation trial as an example 1 (1.8g) were cut out to below 1cm angle extent, 2–(perfluoro hexyl) ethanol 100ml was added to this, it stirred at 130 degrees C for 1 hour, and dissolution processing was performed. The obtained slurry was diluted with 200ml ethanol, and the catalyst was made to sediment with a centrifugal separator (6000 G or 1 hour). About 80 percent of supernatants were collected, and the remainder was diluted with ethanol about 5 times, and carried out centrifugal separation again. About 80 percent of supernatants were collected similarly, and dilution and the actuation which carries out centrifugal separation were repeated for the remainder further 3 times.

[0042] When it dried, and the component including precipitate dissolved platinum with the 50ml aqua regia and calculated the amount of platinum by ICP, it is 38 ppm and has collected 95% of the amount of the platinum used. Although the amount of platinum was calculated by ICP on the other hand about the solution which dissolved in the 1ml aqua regia after collecting supernatants (about 1200ml) and carrying out evaporation to dryness of the 50ml among those, it was below limit of detection. Besides it became clear, and it condensed like the example 1, iquid was air—dried, the vacuum drying was carried out to the last at 50 degrees C for 16 hours, and polymer 1.7g was collected (99% of recovery).

[0043] It is 2 the amount of platinum support of 0.25mg/cm like an example 1 except having dissolved in the nixed solvent of water-ethanol (volume ratio 1:1) so that it might become 5% of the weight of concentration, and naving used the obtained polymer instead of ASHIPU REXX-SS950. The catalyst sheet was produced. When MEA was produced like the example 1 and the output characteristics as a cell were evaluated using this catalyst sheet and the playback film produced in the example 2, the difference with the new film was not accepted in an nitial property and continuous running of 300 hours.

0044]

The example 1 of a comparison] It was 32 ppm when the amount of platinum was calculated by ICP about the solution which cut out one the film / electrode zygote after an evaluation trial to below 1cm angle extent, and was immersed in the 50ml aqua regia for 1 hour. This is equivalent to 80% of the amount of platinum contained in the film / electrode zygote.

0045]

Effect of the Invention] While making easy recovery of the catalyst metal from the conventionally difficult spent ruel cell, the fluorine-containing polymer which has the sulfonic group which is an ingredient it is the same and expensive and useful is recoverable to coincidence. Therefore, it also becomes possible to aim at reuse of this polymer, and since trash is sharply reducible, the load to an environment can be reduced.

Translation done.]

(19) 日本国特許庁 (JP)

(12) 公開特許公報(A)

(11)特許出願公開番号

特開平11-288732

(43)公開日 平成11年(1999)10月19日

(51) Int.Cl. ⁶	微別記号	FI
H01M 8/04		H01M 8/04 Z
B01J 38/00	301	B 0 1 J 38/00 3 0 1 Z
B 2 9 B 17/02	ZAB	B 2 9 B 17/02 Z A B
H01M 8/10		H 0 1 M 8/10
// B 2 9 K 105: 26		
		審査請求 未請求 請求項の数8 OL (全 8
(21)出願番号	特顏平10-90048	(71)出願人 00000033 旭化成工業株式会社
(22) 出願日	平成10年(1998) 4月2日	大阪府大阪市北区堂島浜1丁目2番6号
		(72)発明者 星 信人
		岡山県倉敷市潮通3丁目13番1 旭化成
		業株式会社内
		(72)発明者 池田 正紀
		岡山県倉敷市潮通3丁目13番1 旭化局
		業株式会社内

(54) 【発明の名称】 固体高分子型燃料電池用材料の回収および再利用方法

(57)【要約】

【課題】 使用済み固体高分子型燃料電池からの触媒金属の回収を容易にすると同時にスルホン酸を有する含フッ素ポリマーを回収し、固体高分子型燃料電池の主要材料の効率的なリサイクル利用を可能にする方法を提供する。

【解決手段】 該含フッ素ポリマーを溶解する溶媒中で、燃料電池用イオン交換膜/電極接合体の溶解処理を行い、該含フッ素ポリマー溶液と触媒金属を含む不溶物部分とに分離する工程を含む、燃料電池用材料の回収方法である。また回収された該含フッ素ポリマーを、イオン交換膜および/または電極触媒被覆剤として再利用する方法である。

【特許請求の範囲】

【請求項1】 スルホン酸基を有する含フッ素ポリマーからなるイオン交換膜(a)と、このイオン交換膜に接合される、触媒金属を担持した導電性担体とプロトン伝導性ポリマーからなる電極触媒被覆剤を主要構成材料とするガス拡散電極(b)とで構成される膜/電極接合体を有する固体高分子型燃料電池から、触媒金属および含フッ素ポリマーを回収する方法において、該含フッ素ポリマーを溶解する溶媒中で上記膜/電極接合体の溶解処理を行うことで該含フッ素ポリマーの溶液と、触媒金属を担持した導電性担体を含む不溶物部分とに分離する工程を含むことを特徴とする、固体高分子型燃料電池用材料の回収方法。

1

【請求項2】 触媒金属が貴金属を含んでなることを特 徴とする、請求項1記載の固体高分子型燃料電池用材料 の回収方法。

【請求項3】 触媒金属を担持した導電性担体が炭素材料である、請求項1又は2記載の固体高分子型燃料電池 用材料の回収方法。

【請求項4】 プロトン伝導性ポリマーからなる電極触 20 媒被覆剤が、スルホン酸基を有する含フッ素ポリマーか らなることを特徴とする、請求項1、2又は3記載の固 体高分子型燃料電池用材料の回収方法。

【請求項5】 触媒金属を担持した導電性担体を含む不溶物部分に、燃焼または王水処理を施すことにより触媒 金属を回収することを特徴とする、請求項1、2、3又は4記載の固体高分子型燃料電池用材料の回収方法。

【請求項6】 請求項1、2、3、4又は5記載の固体 高分子型燃料電池用材料の回収方法で得られたスルホン 酸基を有する含フッ素ポリマーを、ガス拡散電極を構成 30 する電極触媒被覆剤として再利用することを特徴とす る、固体高分子型燃料電池用材料の再利用方法。

【請求項7】 請求項1、2、3、4又は5記載の固体 高分子型燃料電池用材料の回収方法で回収されたスルホ ン酸基を有する含フッ素ポリマーを、固体高分子型燃料 電池用イオン交換膜の製造に再利用することを特徴とす る、固体高分子型燃料電池用材料の再利用方法。

【請求項8】 請求項1、2、3、4又は5記載の固体高分子型燃料電池用材料の回収方法で回収されたスルホン酸基を有する含フッ素ポリマー溶液からキャスト法で膜を製造し、その後に該膜を50~200℃で加熱処理して固体高分子型燃料電池用イオン交換膜として再利用することを特徴とする、固体高分子型燃料電池用材料の再利用方法。

【発明の詳細な説明】

[0001]

【発明の属する技術分野】本発明は、固体高分子型燃料電池用に用いられる材料の回収および再利用方法に関し、さらに詳しくは該固体高分子型燃料電池にイオン交換膜および電極触媒被覆剤として用いられるスルホン酸 50

基を有する含フッ素ポリマーと触媒の回収および再利用 方法に関する。

[0002]

【従来の技術】燃料電池は、電池内で水素やメタノール等の燃料を電気化学的に酸化することにより、燃料の化学エネルギーを直接電気エネルギーに変換して取り出すものであり、近年、クリーンな電気エネルギー供給源として注目されている。特にプロトン交換膜を電解質として用いる固体高分子型燃料電池は、高出力密度が得られ、低温作動が可能なことから電気自動車用電源として期待されている。

【0003】このような固体高分子型燃料電池の基本構 造は、イオン交換膜と、その両面に接合された一対の、 触媒層を有するガス拡散電極とで構成され、さらにその 両側に集電体を配する構造からなっている。そして、一 方のガス拡散電極 (アノード) に燃料である水素やメタ ノールを、もう一方のガス拡散電極(カソード)に酸化 剤である酸素や空気をそれぞれ供給し、両方のガス拡散 電極間に外部負荷回路を接続することにより、燃料電池 として作動する。このとき、アノードで生成したプロト ンはイオン交換膜を通ってカソード側に移動し、カソー ドで酸素と反応して水を生成する。ここでイオン交換膜 はプロトンの移動媒体、及び水素ガスや酸素ガスの隔膜 として機能している。従ってこのイオン交換膜としては 高いプロトン伝導性、強度、化学的安定性が要求され、 現在のところ、このような機能を有する膜材料としては 米国デュポン社製の「ナフィオン(登録商標)」や旭化 成工業(株)製の「アシプレックスーS(登録商標)」 に代表されるパーフルオロスルホン酸ポリマー等のスル ホン酸基を有する含フッ素ポリマーが使用されている。

【0004】一方、ガス拡散電極の触媒としては、一般に白金等の貴金属をカーボン等の電子伝導性を有する担体に担持したものが用いられている。このガス拡散電極に担持されている触媒上へのプロトン移動を媒介し、該触媒の利用効率を高める目的で、電極触媒被覆剤としてやはりプロトン伝導性高分子電解質が用いられているが、この材料としてもイオン交換膜と同じパーフルオロスルホン酸ポリマー等のスルホン酸基を有する含フッ素ポリマーを使用することができる。ここでは電極触媒被覆剤であるスルホン酸基を有する含フッ素ポリマーはガス拡散電極の触媒のバインダーとして、あるいはイオン交換膜とガス拡散電極との密着性を向上させるための接合剤としての役割も担わせることもできる。

【0005】このように燃料電池にはガス拡散電極の触媒として、一般に白金等の高価な貴金属類が用いられている上に、イオン交換膜としてあるいは電極触媒被覆剤として用いられているパーフルオロスルホン酸ポリマー等のスルホン酸基を有する含フッ素ポリマーもまた極めて高価な材料である。このうち、貴金属等の触媒金属については燃料電池実用化の前提としてリサイクル利用が

2

3

想定されているが、実際に回収処理を行うためには、触 媒表面を覆っている電極触媒被覆剤としての含フッ素ポ リマーを完全に除去する必要がある。また、イオン交換 膜とガス拡散電極との接合体の大半は含フッ素ポリマー やカーボン等で占められている。これを燃焼により除去 しようとすれば含フッ素ポリマーは極めて燃焼しにくい 上に、燃焼した場合でも含フッ素ポリマーから発生する 腐食性のフッ酸が廃ガス中に多量に含まれるためにフッ 酸除去のための特別な廃ガス処理設備が必要となる。

【0006】また、例えば膜/電極接合体から直接、触 10 媒金属を王水等に溶かし出して回収しようとすれば、触 媒を被覆している含フッ素ポリマーが障害となって完全 な溶出は困難なものとなっていた。その上、たとえ溶出 できたとしても触媒金属に比して大量に含まれる含フッ 素ポリマーのため、大量の王水を必要とすることになる。このように、白金等の触媒金属の回収は決して容易なものではなかった。

【0007】一方、固体高分子型燃料電池のイオン交換膜として用いられる、スルホン酸基を有する含フッ素ポリマーについては、特開平8-171922号公報に膜20のまま回収、再利用する方法が記載されているが、このイオン交換膜は洗浄や乾燥を繰り返すとその膨潤・収縮のためにしわが寄ったり変形したりするために同一のセルに再度組み込むことは極めて困難である。従って、該含フッ素ポリマーを回収、再利用する実用的な方法はこれまでに検討されておらず、上記のように特殊な廃ガス処理装置を備えた設備で焼却処理を行うか、触媒金属を回収することなく埋め立てによる廃棄処分を行うしかなかった。このような方法は、廃棄処理コストを引き上げ、あるいは環境への負荷を増大させるものである。30

【発明が解決しようとする課題】本発明は、従来困難であった使用済み固体高分子型燃料電池からの触媒金属の回収を容易にする方法を提供すると同時に、同じく高価で有用な材料であるスルホン酸基を有する含フッ素ポリマーを回収し、固体高分子型燃料電池の主要材料の効率的な再利用を可能とする方法を提供するものである。

[0009]

[0008]

【発明を解決するための手段】すなわち、本発明は下記 の通りである。

1. スルホン酸基を有する含フッ素ポリマーからなる イオン交換膜(a)と、このイオン交換膜に接合され る、触媒金属を担持した導電性担体とプロトン伝導性ポ リマーからなる電極触媒被覆剤を主要構成材料とするガ ス拡散電極(b)とで構成される膜/電極接合体を有す る固体高分子型燃料電池から、触媒金属および含フッ素 ポリマーを回収する方法において、該含フッ素ポリマー を溶解する溶媒中で上記膜/電極接合体の溶解処理を行 うことで該含フッ素ポリマーの溶液と、触媒金属を担持 した導電性担体を含む不溶物部分とに分離する工程を含 50 むことを特徴とする、固体高分子型燃料電池用材料の回 収方法。

- 2. 触媒金属が貴金属を含んでなることを特徴とす
- る、1記載の固体高分子型燃料電池用材料の回収方法。
- 3. 触媒金属を担持した導電性担体が炭素材料であ
- る、1 又は2 記載の固体高分子型燃料電池用材料の回収 方法。
- 4. プロトン伝導性ポリマーからなる電極触媒被覆剤が、スルホン酸基を有する含フッ素ポリマーからなることを特徴とする、1、2又は3記載の固体高分子型燃料電池用材料の回収方法。
- 5. 触媒金属を担持した導電性担体を含む不溶物部分に、燃焼または王水処理を施すことにより触媒金属を回収することを特徴とする、1、2、3又は4記載の固体高分子型燃料電池用材料の回収方法。
- 6. 1、2、3、4又は5記載の固体高分子型燃料電 池用材料の回収方法で得られたスルホン酸基を有する含 フッ素ポリマーを、ガス拡散電極を構成する電極触媒被 覆剤として再利用することを特徴とする、固体高分子型 燃料電池用材料の再利用方法。
- 7. 1、2、3、4又は5記載の固体高分子型燃料電池用材料の回収方法で回収されたスルホン酸基を有する合フッ素ポリマーを、固体高分子型燃料電池用イオン交換膜の製造に再利用することを特徴とする、固体高分子型燃料電池用材料の再利用方法。
- 8. 1、2、3、4又は5記載の固体高分子型燃料電池用材料の回収方法で回収されたスルホン酸基を有する合フッ素ポリマー溶液からキャスト法で膜を製造し、その後に該膜を50~200℃で加熱処理して固体高分子型燃料電池用イオン交換膜として再利用することを特徴とする、固体高分子型燃料電池用材料の再利用方法。
- 【0010】本発明は、固体高分子型燃料電池を構成するイオン交換膜とガス拡散電極との接合体(以下、膜/電極接合体と称す。)から高価な有用材料を効果的に回収する方法を提供するものであって、その特徴は該膜/電極接合体からスルホン酸基を有する含フッ素ポリマーを溶媒で溶解し、該含フッ素ポリマーの溶液と、触媒金属を含む不溶物部分とに分離する工程を含むことにある。即ち、イオン交換膜、及び触媒を被覆している含フッ素ポリマーを溶解、分離することによって、
- (1) 膜/電極接合体の主成分である含フッ素ポリマー を除いてあるので、触媒金属の含有率が飛躍的に高ま り、該金属の回収操作が容易になる。
- (2) もはや触媒金属を被覆している成分がないので、 直接王水等で金属成分を溶かし出すこともできる。

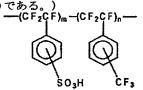
【0011】その上、一方のスルホン酸基を有する含フッ素ポリマー溶液は、適当な精製を施すことにより、溶液としての用途に供することができる。即ち、溶液の濃度や溶媒組成を再調整すれば、まさに電極触媒被覆剤、接合剤および/または電極触媒バインダー(以下、電極

6

触媒被覆剤等と称す。) の溶液そのものであり、キャスト法で製膜すればイオン交換膜として再利用することも可能である。

【0012】即ち、本発明では上記回収操作において含フッ素ポリマーを溶解させる工程を含ませることによって、有用な材料である触媒金属やイオン交換膜および/または電極触媒被覆剤等をリサイクル利用する方法を同時に達成するものである。以下、本発明の構成要件について順次説明する。本発明でいうスルホン酸基を有する含フッ素ポリマーとは、フルスコカーボン骨格あるいは10

【0014】 (式中、 $x=0\sim2$ の整数、 $y=2\sim3$ の整数、 $n/m=1\sim1$ 0である。)
—(CF₂CF)_m-(CF₂CF)_n—



ヒドロフルオロカーボン骨格に置換基としてスルホン酸基を有するポリマーであって、分子内にエーテル基や塩素やカルボン酸基やリン酸基や芳香環を有していてもよい。一般的にはパーフルオロカーボンを主鎖骨格とし、パーフルオロエーテルや芳香環等のスペーサーを介してスルホン酸基を有するポリマーが用いられる。具体例としては下記(1)式や(2)式で表される構造のポリマーを例示することができる。

[0015] 【化2】

(2)

【0016】(式中、n/m=0.1~2である。) 実際、(1)式のポリマーとしては、デュポン社製の「ナフィオン(登録商標)」や旭化成工業(株)製の「アシプレックスーS(登録商標)」等が知られており、(2)式のポリマーは特表平8-512358号公報に燃料電池としての使用が記載されている。これらの中で、(1)式のようなパーフルオロポリマーが、燃料電池として用いたときの安定性に優れ、且つ高価である30ことから、本発明の方法を適用する対象の材料として好ましい。

【0017】また、このような含フッ素ポリマーを溶解して溶液にする方法は、特公昭48-13333号公報や特開平5-223181号公報等に記載されている。これらは燃料電池用触媒等の被覆を目的としたもので、100%の純粋なポリマーのみを溶解の対象とする方法を開示したものである。回収・再利用目的の場合は電極との接合体という複合材料を溶解処理の対象として、これらの条件を用いることができる。

【0018】即ち、本発明において含フッ素ポリマーを溶解する溶媒としては、一般に極性の高い有機溶媒または含フッ素化合物を単独で、あるいは極性の高い有機溶媒と水や含フッ素化合物との混合溶媒等が用いられる。前者の極性の高い有機溶媒としては、アルコール類、アミド類、ケトン類、エーテル類、ニトリル化合物類、含硫黄化合物類等が用いられる。具体的には、アルコール類としてはメタノール、エタノール、1ープロパノール、2ープロパノール、1ーブタノール、2ープタノール、tーブチルアルコール、ペンタノールの各種異性

体、メチルセロソルブ、エチルセロソルブ、プロピルセ ロソルブ等が挙げられ、アミド類としてはジメチルホル ムアミド、ジメチルアセトアミド、N-メチルピロリド ン等が挙げられ、ケトン類としてはアセトン、2ープタ ノン等が挙げられ、エーテル類としてはエチルエーテ ル、プロピルエーテル、イソプロピルエーテル、ブチル エーテル、ジメトキシエタン、ジエチレングリコールジ メチルエーテル、テトラヒドロフラン、ジオキサン等が 挙げられ、ニトリル化合物類としてはアセトニトリル、 プロピオニトリル、バレロニトリル、マロノニトリル、 アジポニトリル等が挙げられ、含硫黄化合物類としては ジメチルスルホキシド、スルホラン等が挙げられる。こ れらは混合物として用いることもできる。また、含フッ 素化合物としては、具体的にはCFC113等のCFC 類、HCFC225ca、HCFC225cb、HCF C123等のHCFC類、HFC236ea、HFC3 38pcc、HFC43-10mee、HFC53-1 2myee等のHFC類、パーフルオロブチルメチルエ ーテル、パーフルオロブチルエチルウーテル等のヒドロ フルオロエーテル類、1, 1, 1, 3, 3, 3-ヘキサ フルオロー2ープロパノール、2, 2, 3, 3, 3ーペ ンタフルオロプロパノール、2,2,2ートリフルオロ エタノール、2, 2, 3, 3-テトラフルオロプロパノ ール、2, 2, 3, 3, 4, 4, 5, 5ーオクタフルオ ロペンタノール、2- (パーフルオロブチル) エタノー ル、2-(パーフルオロヘキシル)エタノール、3-(パーフルオロヘキシル) プロパノール等のフルオロア ルコール類等が挙げられる。これらもまた混合物として

用いることもできる。

【0019】上記極性の高い有機溶媒を水と混合して用いる場合には極性の高い有機溶媒の単独または2種以上の混合物20~100重量%と、水0~80重量%からなる混合溶媒として用いられる。また極性の高い有機溶媒と含フッ素化合物とを混合して用いる場合には任意の割合での使用が可能である。これらの溶媒の中で、スルホン酸基を有する含フッ素ポリマーが(1)式で表されるポリマーである場合には、特に水とアルコール類の混合溶媒、アルコール類等の含酸素化合物と含フッ素化合物との混合溶媒、ニトリル化合物類と含フッ素化合物との混合溶媒、2~(パーフルオロヘキシル)エタノール等の長鎖のフルオロアルコール類が溶解性が高く好ましい。

【0020】本発明において溶解処理の対象となる膜/電極接合体は基本的にはイオン交換膜とガス拡散電極からなり、この他にカーボンペーパー等からなる集電体が含まれることがある。固体高分子型燃料電池の一般的な構成として、イオン交換膜は前記のスルホン酸基を有する含フッ素ポリマーからなり、その厚さとしては、通常20〜200μm程度のものが用いられる。さらにポリテトラフルオロエチレン等の織布からなる芯材を含むこともある。さらにはポリテトラフルオロエチレン等の多孔膜にスルホン酸基を有する含フッ素ポリマーをドープしたものが用いられることもある。

【0021】また、燃料電池に使用されるガス拡散電極 は、触媒金属の微粒子を担持した導電性担体と、プロト ン伝導性ポリマーからなる電極触媒被覆剤を主要構成材 料とするものであり、ポリテトラフルオロエチレン等の 撥水剤が含まれることもある。触媒金属としては、白 金、金、銀、パラジウム、イリジウム、ロジウム、ルテ ニウム等の貴金属類、あるいはそれらをの合金、それら を含む合金が使用可能であり、触媒金属が貴金属を含ん でいる場合に本発明は特に有用である。実際、多くの場 合、触媒金属としては白金が用いられている。導電性の 担体としては、一般にカーボンブラック、活性炭、黒鉛 等の各種炭素材料が用いられる。尚、ポリテトラフルオ ロエチレン等の撥水剤は集電体中にも含まれることがあ る。電極触媒被覆剤としては、プロトン伝導性を有する 材料であればよいが、化学的に安定な材料が好ましいこ とから、膜材料と同種類のスルホン酸を有する含フッ素 ポリマーが用いられることが多い。本発明の方法は、電 極触媒被覆剤にも含フッ素ポリマーが用いられる場合に 特に有用性が高い。

【0022】これらの膜/電極接合体を構成する材料の中で、イオン交換膜中の芯材や電極等に含まれる撥水剤としてのポリテトラフルオロエチレン等のフッ素系材料は不溶性、不燃性、且つ燃焼時にフッ化水素ガスの発生源となる点で本発明の回収方法における妨害物質となりうるものである。しかしながら、芯材は、イオン交換膜 50

の溶解後は容易に適別することができ、接水剤は用いられていたとしてもその量は極めて微量なので本発明の方法に影響を及ぼすことはない。

【0023】次に本発明における固体高分子型燃料電池 用材料の回収方法について具体的に説明する。使用済み、あるいは欠陥等の理由でリサイクルに供される燃料電池は、まずハウジングや配管部品をはずし、ガスケットを除去し、膜/電極接合体を取り出す。この場合、集電体は取り外してから溶解処理を行うことが好ましいが、イオン交換膜と強固に密着している場合は必ずしも取り外す必要はない。ただし、使用済みの膜/電極接合体には金属イオンが蓄積していることがあるので、その場合には溶解処理の前に酸洗浄を行い、該金属イオンを除去しておくことが好ましい。

【0024】この膜/電極接合体は必要により破砕し、所定の溶媒を加え、以下の溶解操作を行う。このとき、用いる溶媒の量は該含フッ素ポリマーを完全に溶かすだけの量があればよいが、一般には過剰量が用いられ、溶解処理を行う膜/電極接合体の重量に対して5~1000倍、好ましくは10~1000倍程度の量が用いられる。また溶解温度は、該含フッ素ポリマーが溶ける温度であればよいが、その温度が溶媒の常圧での沸点を超えていれば、加圧下で溶解処理を行ってもよい。一般には室温~270℃の範囲で溶解処理が行われる。溶解処理を行う時間は、完全な溶解に必要な時間であればよく、通常は1分~1日程度である。溶解を速めるために攪拌や超音波照射を行ってもよい。

【0025】溶解処理後は、含フッ素ポリマー溶液と、 触媒金属を含む不溶物部分とに分離することになるが、 触媒金属を担持した触媒は微粒子なので、芯材やカーボ ンペーパー等の大きな材料は網状のフィルターで容易に 除去することができる。また、後の分離操作を容易にす るためにも除去しておく方が好ましい。触媒粒子を分散 して含む含フッ素ポリマー溶液からは、濾過、自然沈 降、遠心分離等の手段により触媒等の不溶物を分離する が、該含フッ素ポリマー溶液は高濃度では粘稠なので、 適度な粘度となるように希釈等の方法で濃度を調製して おくことが望ましい。希釈する場合は、溶媒は溶解時の 溶媒と異なっていてもよい。濾過は2~10kg/cm 2 程度の加圧濾過が好ましく、粘度を下げるために溶液 を50~200℃程度に加熱しておくことが好ましい。 適材としては広範な種類のものが使用できるが、後で担 体カーボンと共に燃焼処理する方法を採用する場合には 適紙や可燃性ポリマー材料からなるフィルターが好まし い。触媒粒子を保持しやすくするために、濾紙粉末や珪 藻土等の濾過助剤を使用してもよい。濾過後は適当な溶 媒で濾材を洗浄する。

【0026】自然沈降の場合は、濾過の場合よりもさらに希釈する方が好ましく、0.01~1重量%程度の濃度が好ましい。例えば液深が1m程度であれば少なくと

も1時間以上、好ましくは1日以上静置した後に上層部を分離する。下層部はさらに希釈して同様の操作を繰り返す。溶解していたポリマーの90%以上、好ましくは99%以上が分離された後、下層部の溶媒を濾過または蒸留で除き、主として触媒粒子からなる不溶物部分を得る。

【0027】また遠心分離の場合、触媒粒子の比重は金 属の担持量に依るので条件は一概には決められないが、 効率よく短時間で触媒粒子を沈降させるために、遠心力 は1000G以上が好ましく、2000G以上がさらに 好ましく、5000G以上がさらに好ましい。このよう にして分離された触媒金属を含む不溶物部分から貴金属 等の有用金属を回収する方法としては、溶出を妨害する 触媒金属周辺の含フッ素ポリマーがもはや存在しないの で直接王水で白金などの貴金属成分を溶かし出す方法、 あるいは焼却して炭素成分や濾材等を除き、残った灰分 を王水に溶かし、貴金属を溶液として回収する方法が考 えられるが、後者の場合、白金等の触媒金属以外の不溶 物成分が、主としてカーボン系の材料からなっているこ とから、これを焼却処理を行うことにより、カーボン材 20 料を効果的に除去することができる。残った灰分はより 高濃度に金属成分を含み、効率よく回収することができ る。また焼却処理において、主たる含フッ素ポリマーが 既に除去されているので、廃ガス中に腐食性のフッ酸が 含まれることがほとんどなく、フッ酸除去のための特別 な廃ガス処理設備を必要としない。

【0028】一方、含フッ素ポリマー溶液の方はイオン交換膜および/または電極触媒被覆剤等として再利用することができる。再利用するに当たっては、既に固形の不純物は除去してあるが、溶解している不純物を含んで30いる場合には当該不純物を除去するような工程が必要な場合がある。例えば、ポリマーの種類によっては再沈殿による精製を行ってもよく、炭化水素等の該含フッ素ポリマー溶液と混合しない溶剤で、油性の不純物を抽出除去することもできる。また、粗ポリマーを適当な膨潤溶媒で膨潤、洗浄して精製することもできる。また、過酸化水素水やオゾンのような酸化剤で処理して不純物成分を酸化分解除去することもできる。

【0029】該含フッ素ポリマー溶液を電極触媒被覆剤等として再利用する場合には、先に示したように該溶液はかなり希釈された状態で回収されるので適当な濃度に濃縮する必要がある。通常は3重量%~20重量%のものが用いられる。また必要により一般に含フッ素ポリマーの溶液として用いられる溶媒、即ちメタノール、エタ

$$(CF_2CF)_m$$
 —— $(CF_2CF_2)_n$ —— $(OCF_2CF)_x$ — $(OCF_2CF)_x$ — $(OCF_2)_y$ — SO_3H CF_3

【0035】 (式中、x=0~2の整数、y=2~3の整数、n/m=1~10である。)

ノール、1-プロパノール、2-プロパノール、ブタノール等の低級アルコール、あるいはこれらと水との混合溶媒等に置換して用いられる。

10

【0030】一方、該含フッ素ポリマーをイオン交換膜として再生処理する方法としては、例えば該含フッ素ポリマー溶液を必要により濃縮や溶媒置換を行った後、キャスト法による製膜、貧溶媒の凝固浴に浸漬して製膜する湿式製膜、末端基を適当な官能基に変換した後、溶融製膜する方法等が挙げられる。キャスト法による製膜や湿式製膜を行った場合には加熱処理により強度等の膜性能を調整することができる。この場合、加熱処理する温度は50~200℃が適当で、好ましくは80~200℃、さらに好ましくは100~200℃とする。また、溶融製膜する方法としては、スルホン酸基を各種の方法で酸フルオライドに変換した後、製膜する方法などが挙げられる。

【0031】尚、本発明の方法で回収した含フッ素ポリマーの容液は、膜の補修やコーティング用等の容液として、他の目的に転用することも可能である。以上示したように、本発明の方法に従えば、従来困難であった使用済み燃料電池からの触媒金属の回収を容易にするとともに、同じく高価で有用な材料であるスルホン酸基を有する含フッ素ポリマーを同時に回収できる。従って該ポリマーの再利用を図ることも可能になり、廃棄物を大幅に削減できることから環境への負荷を低減することができる。

[0032]

【発明の実施の形態】以下実施例によって本発明をさら に詳細に説明する。

[0033]

【実施例1】<膜/電極接合体(MEA)作製>40重量%の白金触媒担持カーボン(米国E-TEK社製)に、交換容量950g/当量の下記(1)式で表される含フッ素ポリマーを5重量%の濃度で水ーエタノール(体積比1:1)の混合溶媒に溶解した溶液(商品名、アシプレックス-SS950、旭化成工業(株)製)を、白金触媒とポリマーとの重量比が2:1となるように添加し、均一に分散させてペーストを調製した。このペーストを200メッシュのスクリーンを用いて、触媒面積2cm×2cmとなるようにテフロンシート上に塗布した後、大気雰囲気中100℃で乾燥・固定化し、白金担持量0.25mg/cm²の触媒シートを得た。

[0034]

【化3】

(1)

2枚の触媒シートの触媒層を向かい合わせ、その間に交 換容量950g/当量、厚さ100μm、膜面積3cm

×3 c mの同じく(1)式で表される含フッ素ポリマー からなる膜(商品名、アシプレックス-S1004、旭 化成工業(株)製)をはさみ、150℃、圧力50kg / c m² でホットプレスした後、両面のテフロンシート を剥がし、膜/電極接合体(MEA)を作製した。 <分離と回収>電池としての評価試験後の上記膜/電極 接合体5個(9.2g)を1cm角以下程度に裁断し、 これに水ーエタノール(体積比1:1)の混合溶媒50 0mlを加え、オートクレーブ中、230℃で20時間 攪拌し、溶解処理を行った。溶解後は黒色のスラリーが 10 得られた。室温まで冷却後、さらに1リットルのエタノ ールで希釈し、60℃で加圧濾過(濾紙:東洋濾紙製、 No. 4A、濾過助剤:東洋濾紙製、濾紙粉末C) し、 濾紙上の触媒は500mlのエタノールで洗浄した。濾 液は再度60℃で加圧濾過(濾紙:東洋濾紙製、No. 4A、濾過助剤:セライト) し、さらに500mlのエ タノールで洗浄したところ、ほぼ無色のポリマー溶液 (濾液)を得た。

【0036】白金とポリマーの分離の程度を調べるために、まず1回目、2回目濾過の濾過助剤部分の固体¹⁹ F 20 ーNMRスペクトルを測定したところ、ポリマーに由来する吸収は検出されなかった。次に、1回目、2回目濾過の濾紙及び濾過助剤から王水で白金を溶出させ、一方濾液からはその50mlを蒸発乾固した後、1mlの王水に溶解した溶液についてそれぞれICPで白金の量を調べたところ、白金の分布の相対比は濾紙上(1回目)、濾紙上(2回目)、濾液でそれぞれ99.9%以上、0.1%以下、0%であり、含フッ素ポリマーと白金とはほぼ完全に分離されていることがわかった。特に白金を含む成分にはフッ素分も含まず、大部分が容易に 30 燃焼可能な濾紙やカーボンであることから、白金は灰分として高濃度で回収することが可能となった。

【0037】再生膜について新膜の場合と同様にMEAを作製し、電池としての出力特性を評価したところ、初期特性、300時間の連続運転においても新膜との差異は認められなかった。

[0038]

【実施例2】実施例1と同様に、評価試験後の膜/電極接合体5個(9.2g)を1cm角以下程度に裁断し、これに水ーエタノール(体積比1:1)の混合溶媒500mlを加え、オートクレーブ中、230℃で20時間提拌し、溶解処理を行った。得られたスラリーを室温まで冷却後、さらに1.5リットルのエタノールで希釈し、室温で5日間静置した。上澄みの約9割を回収し、残りをエタノールで約5倍に希釈して再度室温で24時間静置した。同様に上澄みの約9割を回収し、残りを希釈、静置する操作をさらに2回繰り返した。

【0039】沈殿を含む成分は乾燥し、50mlの王水で白金を溶解し、ICPで白金量を求めたところ、196ppmであり、触媒層の白金担持量0.25mg/cm²として計算した理論量の98%を回収できた。一方、上澄み液(3500ml)を集め、そのうち50mlを蒸発乾固した後、1mlの王水に溶解した溶液についてICPで白金量を求めたが、検出限界以下であった。この上澄み液を実施例1と同様に濃縮、風乾し、最後に50℃で16時間真空乾燥してポリマー9.1gを回収した(回収率100%)。このポリマーを100mlのnープロパノールに溶解した溶液からキャストフィルム(膜厚70μm)を作成し、得られた膜を実施例1と同様に処理し、MEA作製用の膜とした。

【0040】再生膜について実施例1と同様にMEAを作製し、電池としての出力特性を評価したところ、初期特性、300時間の連続運転においても新膜との差異は認められなかった。

[0041]

【実施例3】実施例1と同様の評価試験後の膜/電極接合体1個(1.8g)を1cm角以下程度に裁断し、これに2-(パーフルオロヘキシル)エタノール100m1を加え、130℃で1時間攪拌し、溶解処理を行った。得られたスラリーを200m1のエタノールで希釈し、遠心分離機(6000G、1時間)で触媒を沈降させた。上澄みの約8割を回収し、残りをエタノールで約5倍に希釈して再度遠心分離した。同様に上澄みの約8割を回収し、残りを希釈、遠心分離する操作をさらに3回繰り返した。

【0042】沈殿を含む成分は乾燥し、50mlの王水で白金を溶解し、ICPで白金量を求めたところ、38ppmであり、白金使用量の95%を回収できた。一方、上澄み液(約1200ml)を集め、そのうち50mlを蒸発乾固した後、1mlの王水に溶解した溶液についてICPで白金量を求めたが、検出限界以下であった。この上澄み液を実施例1と同様に濃縮、風乾し、最後に50℃で16時間真空乾燥してポリマー1.7gを回収した(回収率99%)。

【0043】得られたポリマーを、5重量%の濃度になるように水-エタノール(体積比1:1)の混合溶媒に 50 溶解し、アシプレックス-SS950の代わりに用いた 13

以外、実施例1と同様に白金担持量0.25mg/cm²の触媒シートを作製した。該触媒シートと実施例2で作製した再生膜を用い、実施例1と同様にMEAを作製し、電池としての出力特性を評価したところ、初期特性、300時間の連続運転においても新膜との差異は認められなかった。

[0044]

【比較例1】評価試験後の膜/電極接合体1個を1 cm 角以下程度に裁断し、50mlの王水に1時間浸漬した 溶液についてICPで白金量を求めたところ、32pp 10 mであった。これは膜/電極接合体に含まれる白金量の80%に相当する。

[0045]

【発明の効果】従来困難であった使用済み燃料電池からの触媒金属の回収を容易にするとともに、同じく高価で有用な材料であるスルホン酸基を有する含フッ素ポリマーを同時に回収できる。従って該ポリマーの再利用を図ることも可能になり、廃棄物を大幅に削減できることから環境への負荷を低減することができる。

20

30

40